

# Introduction

Christel Stalpaert, Katharina Pewny, Jeroen Coppens &  
Pieter Vermeulen

Academic discourses have constantly sought to redefine concepts of spectatorship. Theatre makers, philosophers and other scholars consider the effects of theatre crucial. In Aristotle's poetics, the experiences of "mimesis" and "catharsis" form the core of the tragic aesthetic, because the spectators should identify with the protagonists and thus feel empathy with their suffering. Within tragedy, these emotions (the correct meaning and translation of which have caused serious discussions among philologists) are often linked to the hero's fall from good fortune. Religious plays in the Middle Ages (e.g. the so-called *Jesuitenspiele*) served an educational purpose and Friedrich Schiller conceived of the theatre's effect as the moral education of a bourgeois, enlightened audience. With the – implicit and explicit – goals of theatre performances, spectatorial practices have slowly changed within the history of Western theatre. Whereas, in William Shakespeare's time, the spectators were still allowed to talk, eat, shout and party while the performances took place, in the course of the nineteenth century the expectations towards spectatorship changed. Spectators were expected to sit still in silence and concentrate on the events on stage.

In comparison to other theatrical phenomena, the audience has been rather neglected by Theatre Studies, and has only gradually gained attention. It was not until the last decade that spectatorship has been widely theorised. A pivotal publication in that context was Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator*. His critical writings on the stultifying pedagogical logic in classical dramatic theatre inspired theatre scholars such as Claire Bishop, Patrice Pavis, Rachel Fensham and Peter Boenisch to reconsider conceptions of spectatorship in the theatre. This edited collection incorporates the recent developments in philosophy, theatre and perfor-

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS &amp; PIETER VERMEULEN

mance studies with regard to spectatorship. As such, this publication hopes to make a worthwhile contribution to current scholarship in the field.

The various contributions assembled here investigate the shifting practices of spectatorship within changing scopic regimes and the various ways in which contemporary theatre and performance negotiate new modes of spectatorship. Rather than providing a summative assessment of the various contributions, this introduction contextualizes the various theoretical and philosophical frameworks used, throughout the three sections in this collection: 1) Unfolding spectatorial positions; 2) Ethics and Politics; and 3) Interplay of Media.

## Unsettling the Spectator's Position: Corporeal Capacities in Co-creation

An important current topic of discussion entails the ever-unfolding spectatorial position. The disciplines of semiotics, sociology and reception aesthetics considered the spectator as a rather fixed entity within society. Many scholars today conceive of spectators as constantly shifting entities who are constituted in the processes of performances, and vice versa. Post-semiotic perspectives offered by Erika Fischer-Lichte (2004), for example, valorise the “feedback loop” between performers and audience as the vivid energy that constitutes each theatrical performance; there is no performance without the spectator's presence. In his writings on *Acts of Spectating*, Peter Boenisch similarly observes how the classic dramatic notion of the spectator as “recipient” is no longer tenable. “We are no longer [...] the ‘other’ who necessarily complements the stage and gains a position and role (and hence identity) as spectating subject on precisely this ground of being the receiver, on being on ‘the other side’ of theatre” (2012).

The various contributions in this book provide lively examples of the different ways in which spectators are engaged in performances on the edges of postdramatic theatre, new media and the visual arts. These types of spectators are in strong contrast with what Jacques Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator* coined the “police distribution” (42) of theatrical roles and functions. In classic dramatic theatre, the audience is employed as a “harmoniously structured community [...] where everyone is in their place [...] taken up with the duty allocated to them, and equipped with the sensory and intellectual equipment appropriate to that place and duty” (42). These spectators are held ignorant about the process of producing meaning and, furthermore, they are also immobile and passive, “separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act” (2). In this publication, the “spec-

## INTRODUCTION

tator” is not conceived of as a monadic subject or “fixed” entity. Instead, the contributions address a paradigm shift from the spectator as a subject-position to a set of what we would like to call historically variable corporeal capacities in co-creation.

The concept of corporeal capacities implies a mode of “spectating” that involves the whole body, including not only the mind and the eyes, but also the ears, the skin and even the legs, arms, and fingers... This embodied notion of the perceiving subject has not always been accepted in dominant modes of thinking. Descartes, for example, coined the identity of the Self in the phrase “Je pense, donc je suis”, which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and guarantees the coordinating principle of the *cogito* or reason.<sup>1</sup> The Cartesian scopic regime unites the different faculties of a spectating subject (sensibility, imagination, memory, understanding, reason) in a logocentric, harmonious accord. But in fact, none of these faculties are fundamentally in harmony. Gilles Deleuze’s aesthetics of intensities, for example, testifies to a much more complicated network of human faculties in the act of spectating. Taking no satisfaction with the passive subject-position of the spectator as recipient, the contributors of this edited collection explore alternatives to Descartes’ disembodied mind when investigating modes of spectating. Some of them borrow philosophical concepts from Deleuze, others from Spinoza, de Certeau, or Rancière. All of them, however, wonder in one way or another what the body – as spectating entity – is capable of. In doing so, they are more in line with Spinoza’s notion of the embodied mind.

Deleuze exclaimed, with Spinoza, that we do not know what the body is capable of;<sup>2</sup> not only in terms of motivated action, but also, and more importantly, in terms of what its effects are. Deleuze interpreted this as an invitation to think about the body beyond the passivity-activity opposition and beyond the Cartesian body/mind dualism. This inevitably calls attention to the way the harmony of the faculties in classic spectatorship has been grounded in the unity of the thinking Subject as disembodied mind. Deleuze is convinced that the highest function of art is to show, through the means particular to it, what it is to think – what the body and the brain must be for it to encounter the human body as a composition of movement and rest, speed and slowness (Deleuze 1981: 166; see also Stalpaert 2005: 179-180). The body should not, for that matter, be defined by genus and species; it should not be understood in terms of form, function and kind. The body should be described by the affects it is capable of. Conceptualisations of this kind do not focus on the recognition of the identical, of the analogies within social patterns and principles of classification. In the performances discussed in this edition, there is more to the image than representing superficial corporeal characteristics, such as

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS &amp; PIETER VERMEULEN

illustrative expressions, or meaningful poses and gestures, embedded within a narrative. The spectator's position moves beyond comprehending the motivated *actions* that the body is capable of *doing*. This implies that we, in our interpretation as viewers, are not merely geared towards the question of what a body can *do*, but to what the body is *capable of*. Our cognitive conception of knowledge, based on understanding the logical chain of cause and effect, of action and reaction, is expanded. To know what the body is capable of is then to attain the experience and understanding of the fluid structure of the body, of its intimate structure or *fabrica*, and this means thinking beyond the logical demonstrative chain of cause and effect. This conceptualisation of the body hardly involves a "knowledge" in Cartesian terms; it is rather – in Spinozian terms – the cultivation of the intellect. Or, as Deleuze would put it: "we feel a certain body to be affected in many ways" (1981: 30; see also Stalpaert 2016). The contributions in this collected edition all deal with the various ways in which a broad range of theatrical performances – with or without their makers' conscious political decisions or intentions – trigger the spectator's body, its capacities, practices and actions, from a historical as well as a contemporary perspective.

Furthermore, in the wake of Michel de Certeau, we consider spectatorship as "poaching", as an active co-creation of theatre performance, rather than as a passive absorption (de Certeau 1984: 174 and 2006: 13). The spectator's function hence becomes an "interplay of implications" (1984: 170). Our understanding of co-creativity in spectating is informed by de Certeau's theories of nomadic bodily activities. "Poaching their way across fields they did not write", the spectators' corporeal activities are not geared progressively, organised by the preconceived interpretative grid in the performance text (1984: 174). They "venture", as Rancière would put it, "into the forest of things and signs" (Rancière 11). Although these concepts have not yet fully been incorporated in Theatre Studies, de Certeau's understanding of corporeality bears great potential for unfolding spectatorship in the performing arts. We pick it up and transfer it to theatre performances in general. This means not only that performances (in postdramatic theatre) are performative processes that unfold themselves while happening, but also that "spectating" consists of an ever-changing set of corporeal processes and actions that unfold themselves while they are acted out.

This nomadic mode of spectating involving the whole body is further explored in the first section of the book, called Unfolding Spectatorial Positions. In the opening contribution, Patrice Pavis suggests the need to further explore the "trajectory of affect" and the questions of affects, passions and intensification that it

## INTRODUCTION

implies, in order to fully understand the effects of watching. In *Analyzing Performance*, Pavis has already observed how dancers “attract the spectator’s body as a whole” (127). The “danced” spectator involved in this mode of spectating is not only geared by the gaze, he is also and above all corporeally “touched by the grace of the dance” (127). The spectator’s body is affected by the “flux”, by the “energetic intensity of the dancing body” (127), leaving “indelible traces in the spectator” (147). Without the safety net guaranteed by the logical chain of cause and effect in the narrative, the spectator is indeed poaching on slippery terrain. Withdrawn by the harmonious realm granted by his faculty of recognition, the spectator now has to surrender to the intimacy of his/her affected body. The contribution by Pavis is in fact a dialogical response to Rachel Fensham’s book *To Watch Theatre* (2009), in which she stresses the importance of spectatorship as an embodied activity.

In her contribution, Fensham replies to some of Pavis’ suggestions. In that sense, Pavis’ text can be read as a prelude to the following, more detailed case-study chapters. Fensham applies a visceral, sensorial and critical mode of watching to “enter imaginatively into the performative labour of each performance”. This dismantles the equivalence of the gaze with mere passivity. She proposes to “evaluate recent debates that have shaped the concept of affect in diverse fields of the humanities in order to think more closely about affect as a condition of spectatorship in the theatre”. Calling upon two authors, Gilles Deleuze and Silvan S. Tomkins, together with examples from theatre and dance history, Fensham proposes to understand affect as the “movement from thought to action”, including embodied modes of knowing. The activity of watching might then be grasped in a corporeal sense, according to Fensham, as a “sensing, recognising, and responding to what happens between bodies”.

It is no coincidence that the texts by Fensham and Pavis both refer to Spinoza. Following Spinoza, we have knowledge of the affected body through ideas, sensations and perceptions, functioning as scalar signs. For example, in Pina Bausch’s *Kontakthof*, the effect that high heels and slippery evening dresses have on the (affected) bodies of the dancers express discomfort and pain at the moment of dancing. Following Kisselgoff and James, Fensham refers to this in terms of “emotional resonances”, and “linking feelings to object relations”. It is important to notice, however, that Spinoza understands effects optically and not merely causally. The logical narrative chain of cause and effect is absent in elements such as rhythm, equilibrium, balanced contrasts, and subtle lighting. In dance, there is action, but there is also mere movement and much stillness. This means that the “danced spectator” is not merely geared in an interpretation towards the question

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS & PIETER VERMEULEN

of what a body can *do* in the sense of meaningful action but, also, to what the body is *capable of*. What Deleuze coined “the cleavage of causality” (Deleuze 143) in the demonstrative chain of cause and effect, is expanding the cognitive notion of knowledge. This is what is at stake when we are invited to know what the body is capable of; that is, to experience and to comprehend the fluid structure of the body, its intimate structure as a transparent body or *fabrica*.

## Moving Beyond Presuppositions of Equivalence and Opposition: Interplay of Oppositions

A considerable number of twentieth-century theatre makers and performers rose to meet the challenge of moving beyond the harmonious, cognitive mode of spectatorship, as mentioned above. They were aiming at an active, often participatory spectator, on a mental as well as a physical level, who would be forced to think, to provoke the mind to further action. Modern and postmodern performances aimed to do away with the ignorant and passive function of the spectator. They held the mimetic and ocularcentric theatrical regime largely responsible; precisely representation and the optical machinery prepare the gaze for illusion and passivity. Brecht and Artaud, for that matter, pave two different paths of critique. While Artaud’s theatre of cruelty includes the spectator within a “magic circle of theatrical action” (Rancière 4) and hence transforms the spectator from a static and passive voyeur into a vital collaborator, the principle of Brecht’s alienation effect demands a distance for reflection and reasoning within the act of spectating.

According to Rancière, however, some theoretical presuppositions still underpin these modernist and postmodernist modes of spectatorship. The equivalence, for example, of gaze and passivity, of exteriority and separation, as well as the oppositions between the collective and the individual, between activity and passivity, and between self-ownership and alienation, keep even Brecht’s and Artaud’s spectator trapped within a pedagogical logic. After all, Rancière claims, these theatre makers still claim to possess the knowledge that they intend to transmit to the supposedly ignorant spectator. Moreover, in their aim to replace ignorance with knowledge, the theatre-maker-as-schoolmaster also has pretensions to be “the one who knows how to make it an object of knowledge, at what point and in accordance with what protocol” (8). Hence, a profound inequalitarian principle still burdens this so-called new and liberating theatre.

Following Rancière’s reasoning, the interactive theatre of the sixties is similarly trapped in a pedagogical logic, dressed up with the promise of liberation. Accord-

## INTRODUCTION

ing to Jean-Jacques Lebel, the frontman and French spokesman for the *happening*, the collective intercommunication at the heart of the happening would liberate the spectator from the unidirectional or monological theatre model (36). It was the intention to explore other sensations than those driven by the gaze, “faisant appel simultanément à plusieurs modes de perception et de communication” (48). A considerable number of performers rose to meet this challenge later on in the twentieth century and were aiming at an active, participatory spectator who would be forced to think, to provoke the mind to further action. This interactive theatre would stimulate creative observation and thinking, with attention to corporeality alongside reasoning. The spectator who refused or failed to participate was in some participatory theatre painstakingly labelled as the “uncomprehending outsider” or the “unwelcoming passivist” (Stalpaert 2009: 80). This terminology betrays the compulsiveness that some forms of interactive theatre were burdened with. This discourse of spectatorial liberation depends on a process of separation alongside the opposing poles of active and passive, regaining a lost unity. In the end, this kind of interactive theatre is just as manipulative as the monological theatre model it reacts against, and it even renders this manipulation imperceptible (ibid.). It holds out the promise of liberation, but the so-called liberated spectator is still geared along a predetermined path towards “knowledge” and “action”. The spectator’s so-called liberation is “a fatal illusion of autonomy, trapped in the logic of dispossession and its concealment” (Rancière 15). For a theatre to become truly liberating, Rancière explains, an interplay with(in) the equivalences and the oppositions<sup>3</sup> underpinning the debates of spectatorship should be the heart of the matter. It is the opposing mechanism itself that should be dismantled.

This publication not only investigates the (re)distribution of the role and function of the spectator in theatre, it also reconsiders the persistent equivalences and oppositions that underpin the debate of spectatorship in contemporary theatre and performance (studies). The contributors thus discuss performance strategies that uncouple “mastery” from “knowledge”, that inaugurate an “interplay of opposites”, and focus more on affect than effect.

### Capacities Moving Beyond the Passivity-Activity Opposition. Toward Response-ability in Relational Dramaturgies

In many of today’s performative events, the “spectator”, indeed, is no longer a silent, physically distant observer or viewer. The distance between stage and audi-

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS &amp; PIETER VERMEULEN

ence, considered a hallmark of theatrical performance, is being radically erased in performances that move, walk and guide their spectators through theatre buildings and public spaces. Spectators, or rather “spectactors”, “participants”, “applicants” or even “users” become active agents whose presence constitutes the process of the performance. The difference with the political theatre of the 1970s, and its interactive theatre, is that there is more to the game than to follow one predetermined path, or the mere reconstitution of a lost unity. It is the interplay between opposites that prevents the spectator from being stuck in a predetermined “role” (Bishop). To participate in a (theatre) performance implies being open, being alert and observing, and hence taking responsibility for what is experienced in relation to the world at large. What the spectator’s body is capable of is also its response-ability, in the sense of an ability to respond. Moving beyond the passivity-activity opposition, the spectator thus not only enters the political but also the ethical realm. Affective and corporeal engagement hence calls upon an ethical responsibility. Or, as Rancière put it in *The Emancipated Spectator* (in reference to Nicolas Bourriaud): a “relational aesthetics”.

This brings us to the place of the spectator at the heart of the discussions on the relations between art, politics and ethics. The influential essay *Esthétique relationnelle* (*Relational Aesthetics*) by art historian and critic Nicolas Bourriaud was published in 1998. With the term “relational aesthetics”, Bourriaud refers to certain practices that he discerns in the visual arts of the nineties (Pewny and Leenknecht).<sup>4</sup> He claims that the work of artists such as Pierre Huyghe, Vanessa Beecroft, or Rirkrit Tiravanija should be understood as “establishing intersubjective encounters” between the people involved. In their relational art, meaning is elaborated *collectively*” (Bourriaud 2002: 18).<sup>5</sup>

In her influential article “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics” (2004), Claire Bishop critiques Bourriaud’s notion of relational aesthetics for addressing “a collective social entity” and – even more problematically – for actually giving “the where-withal to create a community” (54). Bishop sides here with Rancière’s assumption that assembled spectators cannot and should not be equated with a community. “Because living bodies on stage address bodies assembled in the same space, it seems that it is enough to make theatre the vehicle for a sense of community”, he exclaims. Instead, Rancière observes, theatre should be “the invention of new intellectual adventures” (2009: 15), with individuals “plotting their own paths in the forest of things” (2009: 16).

We share Rancière’s scepticism concerning the collective power of relational aesthetics, uniting members in a collective body of interactivity. This critique



## INTRODUCTION

should not prevent us, however, from considering the benefits of a notion of spectators as composite bodies, in a sense offered by Spinoza. According to Spinoza in Book V of his *Ethics*, to know what the body is capable of is not an individual matter of subjectivity. To him, embodied knowledge is intrinsically connected with “the composition of relations”, of which the most basic element is “the agreement of our body with *one* other” (Deleuze 144).

A body in motion or in rest must have been determined to motion or rest by another body, which likewise has been determined to motion and rest by another body, and that body by another, and so ad infinitum. (Spinoza 30)

Spinoza’s ethics is a relational issue; it is certain affects that give us vitality and serve as a springboard to relate in a positive way to other bodies – i.e. “to attain common notions” (Deleuze 144) in creating a “composite body” (Spinoza 38). This notion of spectators as composite bodies resonates with Bishop’s antagonist version of a relational aesthetics and Chantal Mouffe’s notion of a relational identity.<sup>6</sup> It entails a mode of spectatorship that demands a mental flexibility in encountering the other in wonder, in the sense that we have to open up towards several possible meanings, relations and identities. Spectating then no longer works with common sense to recognize otherness on the basis of easily recognizable external features such as race, gender or age. The spectator cannot fall back upon a demonstrative chain of meaningful action, culminating in a motivated act of judgement and (rightful) punishment. To spectate is to meet or encounter according to an *accord discordant* or discordant harmony, according to an agreement to differ and disagree (Deleuze 183). In this encounter, the process of interpretation is never closed off and hence hoarse moral judgment is constantly postponed. (Stalpaert 2010, 2012: 388-389)

Rancière suggests that an aesthetic rupture of the distribution of the sensible itself is needed for art to become political. The emancipatory power of this redistribution of the sensible lies in the dismantling of the oppositional thinking itself, and in thinking through the equality principle. Only in this way, Rancière proceeds, does art engage in new intellectual adventures, in which “the shared power of the equality of intelligence links individuals” (16). Despite Rancière’s hesitance towards linking art with ethics, we believe that ethics in spectatorship remains an important element in the redistribution of the sensible amongst composite spectating bodies. This ethical response-ability in the agreement to disagree is a delicate balancing act. However, the desire to try, despite the risk of failing, and to fail again, has an important articulatory potential in art.

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS &amp; PIETER VERMEULEN

Several contributions in this volume address how performances challenge the spectator to tickle the interplay of opposites from an antagonist relational perspective. This interplay opens up an ethical space of relating for the spectator. This ethical reflection is not a pedagogical or moral one, where the artist instructs the audience on how to think. Rather, the discussed performances open up an “ethical arena” in which spectators need to negotiate their own ethical stance.

In her contribution, Katharina Pewny deals with the ethical and aesthetic aspects of spectatorship, using Margareth Obexer’s *Das Geisterschiff* and Sarah Vanagt’s *Dust Breeding* as case studies. Both practices are exemplary of a certain resistance to the possibility of representing or mimetically negotiating suffering. Pewny coins performances depicting the vulnerability of our human existence as a “theatre of the precarious”. Drawing upon Emmanuel Levinas, she clarifies the way spectators face the other in theatrical performances. The absence of the (vulnerable or violated) other is a recurrent strategy in postdramatic theatre, often making use of classic devices such as the messenger’s report. Spectators thus come face-to-face with the trace of (the absence of) the other, invoking the philosophical ideas of both Levinas and Derrida. Within this theoretical framework, Pewny investigates how these “traces of the other” are exemplified in the theatre texts of Jelinek and Obexer and in the video works or performances by Tanja Ostojic, and the videos by Sara Vanagt. Each of these practices can be read as a search for “the trace of the trace of the other”. The ethical dimension implied in these pieces could precisely consist in the request for spectators to mimetically follow the search for the vanished other.

Christel Stalpaert investigates how the *trompe-l’oeil* or optical illusion is used as an ambiguous theatrical device in the dance performance *MAP ME*, by Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Kurt Vandendriessche, and how this opens up an ethical relation, not only between the dancers, but also between the spectators and the dancers. Stalpaert applies her notion of the intersubjective relation, as conceived by Luce Irigaray in her *An Ethics for Sexual Difference*, to the choreographic encounter between the two performers in *MAP ME* as a delicate *pas de deux*. In the interplay between interiority and exteriority (see Merleau-Ponty’s *la chair*) intermingling activity and passivity, the performance actually puts spectators in a state of uncertainty or undecidedness, erasing clear boundaries between reality and fiction, constantly shape-shifting and renegotiating their relationships towards it. It is precisely this undecidability that prevents art from being enclosed in a stultifying, pedagogical logic. Opposing the reductive aspect of the “mirroring attitude” in spectatorship, Stalpaert (following Deleuze) advocates “an agreement to disagree” in a mutual encounter. This is developed alongside a “phantasmatic morphology”,

## INTRODUCTION

Irigaray's alternative to Lacan's phantasmatic anatomy, where corporeality not only implies body-images (imagoes) but also body-experiences in "mapping" the "other" in performances.

Kristof Van Baarle takes another, interesting approach on how failure in participatory performance challenges the ethical position of the spectator. In his analysis, he tackles the idea of the "accomplice spectator" by studying the practice of Brussels-based collective C&H. They often engage their (future) spectators in a kind of conspiracy, involving them in an event/performance that is yet to come (in *Postcards from the Future*). They blur the line between daily life and staged intervention. Failure, or at least its possibility, plays an essential role in all this. By letting the eventual fulfilment of the postcard's prediction be dependent on the "spectator", s/he becomes an accomplice to the very activity of C&H as a collective. Other performances (*The Nickolodeon*, *Curator's Cut*) also activate the spectators, involving them as (possible) performers. In this way, Van Baarle can speak of an "empowerment" of the spectator. The possibility of failure, however, shifts the focus from the final result (performance) to the potentiality or inactuality, as described by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben. C&H's activities raise the question "How can we fail together?". Their activities or "products" resist reproduction or commodification. Likewise, the production *We have no choice* pushes the limits of spectatorship, and challenges the presupposed equivalence of audience and community.

## Moving Beyond Medium-Specificity: Interplay of Media

In a third section, the book investigates the perceptual, dramaturgical and aesthetic function of (the interplay of) media in spectatorial processes within contemporary performing arts. We hence face the fact that the intermediality of theatre has a strong impact on unfolding processes of spectatorship.

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière also welcomes the interplay of media, accentuating "the heterogeneity of the elements" (28). To him, the hybridisation of artistic means conveys "a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story." (22). Artistic media, indeed, seem – more than ever – to be "in a permanent condition of mutation" (Vanderbeeken, et al. 9)

At the symposium entitled "Use and Disadvantages of the Media Concept" at the end of the 8th congress of the German Society of Theatre Studies (Erlangen,

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS &amp; PIETER VERMEULEN

2006; see Schoenmakers 545-563), Christopher Balme developed the notion of media as “the relationship between technology and human body, that is to say between technology and human perceptivity” (Balme 148f). It hence becomes clear that spectating is directly involved with (inter)medial processes, or is rather even constituted by it as such. Being historically bound, the employment of media in performances is based on technical development and hence on the changing relation of different media to each other (Balme in Schoenmakers 548). Kati Röttger, for instance, suggests that “the theatre, understood as intermedial practice, can make tangible [...] the medial modalities by which the visible, the audible, image, language and music come into being” (Röttger in Schoenmakers 123). Theatre is thus an intermedial medium, in which different dynamics and forms of intermediality are performed, and by which spectators perceive these forms (Pewny 2014). That is why Robin Nelson partly rejects the notion of “spect-actor” and instead uses the term “experiencer”: “In the context of contemporary arts and media, experiencer serves where audience or even ‘spect-actor’ (Boal) prove to be inadequate. It suggests a more immersive engagement in which the principles of composition of the piece create an environment designed to elicit a broadly visceral, sensual encounter, as distinct from conventional theatrical, concert or art gallery architectures which are constructed to draw primarily upon one of the sense organs – eyes (spectator) or ears (audience).” (Nelson in Bay-Cheng 45)

In a publication by the international workgroup Intermediality (Bay-Cheng), Chiel Kattenbelt aims at a self-reflexive and performative concept of intermediality. It is based on a critical investigation of Bolter’s and Grusin’s notion of “immediacy” (Bolter and Grusin; see Kattenbelt 35) and emphasises that performative intermediality does not so much have the effect of unity, as in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but rather an effect of “hypermediacy”, in the sense of diversity and discrepancy (Kattenbelt 35). The medium of theatre is thus always mixed, but its different media have specific sensory and semiotic ratios that are always embedded in a social practice and in a tradition of visibility. An important consequence is that research into the interplay of media and its effects on the spectator need to cast light not only on the intertwining of media, but also on the sensory relation that each of these media entail, without reducing perception to the sense of sight (Mitchell 400). Intermedial performances, then, create moments of disturbance in a clash between different media, between the live and the virtual, and between different sensory relations that disorient the spectator and self-reflexively dislocate perception and question the position of the spectator in intermedial performance. The following contributions ask for the interplay of media (and not for intermediality)

## INTRODUCTION

and the moments of disturbance it causes, highlighting further aspects of spectatorship and interplay of media, which have so far been neglected by Theatre Studies, such as the optical illusion.

In *Framing Technology. The Performative Trompe-l'oeil Challenging the Eye*, Jeroen Coppens situates the use of the *trompe-l'oeil* effect within postdramatic theatre, with reference to the performances of Vincent Dunoyer. His contribution starts off with a theoretical analysis of the perspective as a symbolical form (H. Damisch), a scopic regime that emerged in the Renaissance and which can be related to the distanced, panoptical gaze. This mechanism is not only apparent in the visual arts, but equally in the performing arts. In the seventeenth century, the vantage point can be identified with the point of view from the box of the king, as a “privileged spectator”. In postdramatic theatre, this coherent essence is disentangled and deconstructed, often allowing the spectator to choose his/her own vantage point. One should make a clear distinction, Coppens states, between the *trompe-l'oeil* as an artistic device and illusionism as mere trickery or deception. Marie Louise d’Orange Mastai proposes to use the *trompe-l'oeil* as an interdisciplinary analytical tool. In the same line, Coppens describes the *trompe-l'oeil* as being on the crossroads between emersion and immersion: it can generate a critical insight through a kind of *Aha-Erlebnis* where the illusionary effect is broken. The *trompe-l'oeil* therefore has a kind of double face: its misleading, even morally or politically repulsive character and its critical charm or potential for the spectator. In *Vantage Point* (2011) by Loze & Yvelin, this double face triggers the undecidedness on behalf of the spectator.

Rosemary Klich’s article deals with the “aesthetic of emergence” in the performative works of Blast Theory, where the spectators become co-authors, developing and completing the work by interacting through its media. In this sense, the interactivity of the audience can be described as “emergent”. The three performances discussed – *Rider Spoke*, *Day of the Figurines*, and *Can You See Me Now?* – all create an “intermedial system”, generating a potential for interaction and exchange between the live and the mediated. This interaction not only takes place between user and media, but – to an even greater extent – between different users via media, in a complex and dynamic system. The two-way flow of information that this generates is not predetermined and thus cannot be predicted. Elaborating on some core ideas of complexity theory, Klich describes the self-organising patterns at work here. The complex interactions between the work and the participant are described as a “dynamic heterarchy” (Hayles). This shared sense of co-creation, co-evolution and development between the participants certainly explains the pleasure of their

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS &amp; PIETER VERMEULEN

experience, comparable to natural living systems. This is what Klich relates to Rancière's conception of the theatre as communitarian, rather than a community. The same can be applied to computer games and current forms of new media performances. Blast Theory's creations are characterised, according to Klich, by a "contemplative immersion" (Adorno), a paradoxical tension between critical distance and emotional investment.

Anne Watthee focuses on the interplay of different media in the works of Ariane Loze, a young Belgian performance artist. In her analysis, she uses a threefold conceptual distinction, made by Michel Picard in *La lecture comme jeu* (1986), originally intended for the field of literature, but recuperated for the performing arts by Bertrand Gervais (*A l'écoute de la lecture*, 2006). Watthee first elaborates on some film pieces by Loze. Loze hereby acts as an all-round performer, taking the role of actors/actress, director, cameraman, scriptwriter, etc. In her most recent piece, *Vantage Point* (2011), based on the idea of *trompe-l'oeil*, the artist attempts to position her work at the zero degree of the filmic experience. The aforementioned threefold distinction made by Picard is that between the *liseur* or "reader", the *lectant* or "reading", and the *lu* or "read". At the level of the reader, her works demand a simple suspension of disbelief, where the immediate scopic pleasure is primary. The reading, then, involves a critical distance, and is aimed at the *libido sciendi*, or the pleasure of intellectually grasping a situation. This is where the spectator is confronted with the need to enter a meta-fictional logic. The viewers are, again, conjured to question the "vantage point". The third scopic regime of spectatorship is the *lu* – the "read" – related to the emotional engagement rendered possible by the live creation, often a sense of uncanniness in Ariane Loze. With the viewer in a position of knowing/seeing more than would usually be the case, Watthee can speak of a *libido dominandi*.

Taking her multimedia project *Scattering of the Fragile Cherry Blossoms* as a starting point, An van. Dienderen situates her artistic practice within the broader scope of "expanded documentary". In a way that is similar to the notion of expanded cinema (Vanderbeeken), documentary filmmakers are augmenting the medial possibilities beyond the classical single-screen tradition, expanding their relation to viewers. In her ongoing project, van. Dienderen engages the viewer in an intermedial ethical project, where truth (just like the image) is not "fixed" but constantly renegotiated. Van. Dienderen draws on the work of Kutlug Ataman, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, and Maya Deren to demonstrate how she reshuffles the spatiotemporal context vis-à-vis the classical cinematic set-up, in order to create a more embodied experience for the viewer. As in the work of filmmaker Ataman and the Finnish

## INTRODUCTION

artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, the camera functions as a mediator to negotiate between artist, subject and audience. Working with a meta-reflection on the codes of the documentary film format, van. Dienderen gives the viewer the opportunity to walk through the viewing space and encounter different voices. Van. Dienderen's ongoing project also bears out Maya Deren's notion of "a vertical investigation, a time of meanwhile which asks us to stay with, and think around, an event" (Fowler). Spectating, therefore, can be conceived as an "ever-changing set of corporeal processes and actions that unfold themselves while they are acted out".

## Conclusion

Whereas "*the* spectator" and "*the* audience" have traditionally been depicted as assembled bodies in a theatre space, we have chosen an image of unfolding leaves to feature on the cover of this anthology *Unfolding Spectatorship*. It is a film still from Sarah Vanagt's *Élevage de poussière / Dust Breeding* (2013). Several of these images feature further on in this book. In *Élevage de poussière / Dust Breeding*, Vanagt weighs the value of images as objective testimonies to a conflict. Instead of merely documenting the war in the former Yugoslavia, she measures "the gap between the facts, the material proof of these facts, the images that represent them and their interpretation" (Vanagt website). She does so by a simple movement of the hand – a pencil being rubbed against a sheet of paper placed over an object, in this case, an object from within the courtroom of the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. This "revelatory" rubbing process does not aim at revealing the truth. It does not elaborate a "dramaturgy of sin and redemption (Rancière 7). Instead, Vanagt "reveals a landscape of details inviting us to look at things differently" (Vanagt website).

In much the same way, with *Unfolding Spectatorship* we intend to explore the contemporary theatre landscape, revealing the interplay between audience and community, gaze and passivity, collective and reality, image and living reality, mediation and simulacrum, activity and passivity, self-ownership and alienation. This means that, as is the case with media, it is neither interesting nor productive to aspire to an ontologisation (and thus a generalisation) of the spectator – a category too broad, panoptical and objective for our purposes. We prefer to unfold different and constantly shifting relations and capacities for the processes of spectatorship. This ever-shifting notion of spectatorship might point to the borders and possibilities of a new scopic regime, a visual (sub)culture that privileges the individual point of view over the objective vantage point, that transgresses dichotomies (active/

CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS & PIETER VERMEULEN

passive, body/mind, master/student) by travelling in an interplay of opposites, and which opens up an ethical space of relating, rather than an objectifying process of understanding. *Unfolding spectatorship* then, becomes a question of unfolding the spectator, in processes that constantly and dynamically shift, transform and reconfigure. It entails a new sense of community, relationality and ethical awareness.

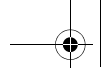
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CHRISTEL STALPAERT, KATHARINA PEWNY, JEROEN COPPENS & PIETER VERMEULEN

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